

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 236823 TOSEC 270688

NODIS

FOR EAGLEBURGER FROM MCMANAWAY AND HECK

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: TERRORISM: LEBANESE GROUP DEMANDS FOR HOSTAGE
RELEASE

1. FULL TEXT OF INSTRUCTIONS TO BEIRUT DEALING WITH RE-
PORTED HOSTAGE SITUATION THERE FOLLOWS BELOW. WE WILL ALSO
REPEAT SEPARATELY TO YOU BEIRUT 7643 AND ARE SENDING YOU
MESSAGE WITH UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF FRENCH TEXT OF EX-
TORTION LETTER.

2. SUBSTANCE OF INSTRUCTIONS TO BEIRUT REFLECTS DAY-LONG
CONSULTATIONS WITH PERSONS RECENTLY IN BEIRUT LIKE RAY HUNT,
WITH INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY, AND WITH NEA. GENERAL APPROACH
WAS DISCUSSED WITH SCOWCROFT, WHO IS IN AGREEMENT. MES-
SAGE WAS AUTHORIZED BY HABIB.

3. IN DRAFTING THESE INSTRUCTIONS WE HAVE TAKEN INTO
ACCOUNT:
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(A) IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING INTEGRITY OF OUR POLICY
ON TERRORISM,

(B) DELICATE POLITICAL PROBLEM IN LEBANON INCLUDING

LIMITATIONS ON OUR CONTACTS WITH PLO,
(C) LACK OF CLEAR-CUT GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY WHICH
REQUIRES US TO DEAL WITH THREE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS AS SET
FORTH IN THESE INSTRUCTIONS.

(D) CONCLUSION HERE THAT THERE IS NO POLITICAL DIMENSION
TO THIS - IT IS STRAIGHT FINANCIAL EXTORTION ATTEMPT.

4. GENERAL CONSENSUS HERE AND IN EMBASSY BEIRUT IS THAT
LETTER IS HOAX. HOWEVER, WE ALL FEEL THAT AT THIS STAGE
WE SHOULD TREAT IT SERIOUSLY. IF DIFFERENT LEBANESE
AUTHORITIES FAIL TO RESPOND TO OUR QUERIES, WE DO NOT
BELIEVE WE SHOULD DO ANYTHING FURTHER IN THE WAY OF
ATTEMPTING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE TERRORIST.

5. WE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED DOING NOTHING TO SEE IF WE
COULD SMOKE THESE PEOPLE OUT BUT CONCLUDED THAT, ON
BALANCE, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN TAKING THE GREATER RISK FOL-
LOWING THAT COURSE. THIS WAY, SINCE WE HAVE STAYED FIRMLY
WITHIN OUR POLICY AND DONE NOTHING UNPRECEDENTED REGARDING
OUR POLITICAL POSTURE VIS-A-VIS THE VARIOUS FACTIONS IN
LEBANON, THE WORST WE CAN BE FAULTED FOR IS PERHAPS TAKING
THE THREAT TOO SERIOUSLY. IN ANY EVENT, OUR GUESS IS THAT
THIS ONE WILL UNFOLD SLOWLY OR NOT AT ALL. BUT IF IT IS
NOT A HOAX AND THE KIDNAPPERS BEGIN TO MAKE GOOD ON THEIR
THREATS WE WILL AT LEAST HAVE LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR
TAKING FURTHER STEPS AND WE WILL KNOW MORE THAN WE DO NOW.
REGARDING TIMING, WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING THE TERRORISTS
HAVE NOT STARTED THEIR CLOCK ALREADY.

6. BEGIN TEXT OF MESSAGE:

UNTIL WE HAVE FULLY SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE TO CON-
TRARY, WE FEEL WE ARE COMPELLED TO PROCEED ON
ASSUMPTION THAT LETTER FOR SO-CALLED R.H.A.I.L.
LEBANESE GROUP IS AUTHENTIC AND ITS DEMANDS SHOULD
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BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES
UPON RECEIPT OF SUCH DEMANDS WE WOULD IMMEDIATELY
TURN TO HOST GOVERNMENT AND REMIND IT OF ITS
RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTION OF ALL PERSONS,
INCLUDING U.S. CITIZENS WITHIN ITS TERRITORY.
GIVEN SITUATION IN LEBANON AND LACK OF ADEQUATE
IDENTIFICATION OF THIS GROUP OR ITS LOCATION WE
BELIEVE IT PRUDENT TO CONTACT THE SEVERAL EXISTING
AUTHORITIES WHO MAY BE ABLE TO ASSIST IN THIS
MATTER.

OUR APPROACH TO EACH GROUP (CHRISTIAN, PLO, AND
LAA) WILL VARY AND REQUIRE A DIFFERENT RATIONAL.
SINCE INITIAL CONTACT ACCORDING TO EXTORTION

LETTER IS IN CHRISTIAN CONTROLLED LEBANON, IT WILL BE BEST TO MAKE DETAILED APPROACH TO CHRISTIANS. WE WOULD PLAN TO BRING THEM INTO PICTURE BY PROVIDING THEM WITH TEXT OF EXTORTION LETTER AND INQUIRING HOW THEY PROPOSE TO DEAL WITH MATTER.

ACCORDINGLY YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO GET IN TOUCH BY TELEPHONE WITH SARKIS OR ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY TO CONVEY BASIC MESSAGE SET FORTH BELOW, PLUS TEXT OF EXTORTION LETTER. WE RECOGNIZE THAT SUCH TALKS WILL BE MONITORED BY FATAH BUT BELIEVE THIS A REASONABLE RISK TO TAKE SINCE, IN ANY EVENT, THE PLO IS TO BE CONTACTED (SEE BELOW). IF TELEPHONE CONTACT CANNOT BE MADE, THEN YOU SHOULD ARRANGE TO DELIVER -- POSSIBLY THROUGH KHAWAND -- A WRITTEN MESSAGE TO SAME PEOPLE. BASIC MESSAGES YOU SHOULD CONVEY TO SARKIS OR OTHER APPROPRIATE CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY IS ALONG FOLLOWING LINES -

(A) WE HAVE NOT REACHED FINAL JUDGMENT ON AUTHENTICITY OF TERRORIST DEMANDS BUT WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PROCEED ON ASSUMPTION THAT DEMANDS ARE SERIOUS AND SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. WE ARE TREATING THE MATTER WITH UTMOST DISCRETION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT YOU WOULD DO LIKEWISE. WE WOULD WELCOME ON URGENT BASIS ANY COMMENTS WHICH YOU HAVE ABOUT LETTER AND ITS AUTHENTICITY. SPECIFICALLY, CAN YOU SHED ANY LIGHT
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ON VALIDITY OF LEBANESE GROUP'S CLAIM THAT IT IS HOLDING FORTY-SEVEN HOSTAGES, OF WHICH TWENTY-NINE ARE SAID TO BE U.S. CITIZENS, AND EIGHTEEN FROM VARIOUS WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES?

(B) ASSUMING LETTER IS NOT A HOAX, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT IT IS CONTRARY TO USG POLICY TO PAY RANSOM OR OTHERWISE YIELD TO THIS KIND OF BLACKMAIL. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF DOING SO IN THIS CASE.

(C) AT SAME TIME, WE ARE NATURALLY CONCERNED ABOUT WELFARE OF ALLEGEDLY KIDNAPPED AMERICAN CITIZENS AND WE WOULD WELCOME ANYTHING YOU COULD DO TO SECURE THEIR SAFETY.

(D) WE DO NOT WISH TO COUNSEL YOU ON HOW TO RESPOND TO DEMANDS FROM ABDUCTORS. IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE KIDNAPPER GROUP TO CONSIDER ITS DEMANDS WE WILL ASSUME A NEUTRAL POSITION TOWARD YOUR DECISION IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR RIGHT AND OBLIGATION TO PROTECT FOREIGNERS BY ANY MEANS YOU CONSIDER BEST.

(E) AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF OUR POLICY IN SUCH SITUATIONS AND OUR VIEW OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY, WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHAT STEPS YOU ARE PREPARED TO TAKE TO ENTER INTO CONTACT WITH THE KIDNAPPERS FOR THE PURPOSES OF ASCERTAINING THE WELL-BEING OF THE HOSTAGES AND OF SECURING THEIR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE.

LAA - YOU SHOULD ALSO RAISE YOUR G-2 CONTACT TOMORROW SEPTEMBER 24 AND PASS TEXT OF EXTORTION LETTER. TELL HIM THAT WE HAVE NOT REACHED FINAL JUDGMENT ON AUTHENTICITY OF TERRORIST DEMANDS BUT WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PROCEED ON ASSUMPTION THAT DEMANDS ARE SERIOUS AND SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. WE ARE TREATING THE MATTER WITH UTMOST DISCRETION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT G-2 WOULD DO LIKEWISE. INFORM HIM THAT WE ARE APPROACHING CHRISTIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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AUTHORITIES BUT RECOGNIZING THAT FORTY-SEVEN HOSTAGES MAY BE HELD IN TERRITORY IN WHIC; LAA HASINFLUENCE,ASK WHAT THEY INTEND TO DO AND SOLICIT SUGGESTION OR INFORMATION FROM THEIR ASSETS.

PLO - CONCURRENTLY RSO O'BRIEN SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH HIS PLO CONTACT AND PROVIDE HIM WITH COPY OF EXTORTION LETTER. EXPLAIN TO HIM THAT WE CANNOT IGNORE FACT THAT DEMANDS MAY BE SERIOUS AND THAT WE ARE APPROACHING CHRISTIANS SINCE ACCORDING TO EXTORTION LETTER CONTACT IS TO BE MADE IN THAT PART OF LEBANON. SINCE FORTY-SEVEN HOSTAGES MAY BE IN WEST BEIRUT OR SOUTH LEBANON

TO DETERMINE IF THEY HAVE SUGGESTION OR INFORMATION FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE ASSETS. POINT OUT THAT WE ARE TREATING THIS MATTER WITH UTMOST DISCRETION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT THEY WOULD DO LIKEWISE.

FYI OUR POLICY IN DEALING WITH ABDUCTIONS AND ACTS OF TERRORISM AGAINST US CITIZENS IS SET FORTH IN STATE 283548 WHICH WE ARE REPEATING TO YOU.

END TEXT. ROBINSON

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